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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/17/2028  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ SOFTENS TONE ON BILATERAL RELATIONS

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ,  
REASON 1.4(D)

¶1. (C) Summary: During televised remarks to the nation on October 16, Chavez made several seemingly conciliatory remarks regarding bilateral ties in response to the U.S. presidential candidates' comments on the need to achieve energy independence from Venezuela and the Middle East. Chavez specifically discounted the idea that the United States could do without Venezuelan oil and said our two countries should "sit down" together because we "need each other." Chavez's latest statements come five weeks after the expulsion of Ambassador Duddy and continued government-manufactured agitprop that the USG is plotting against his government. His latest statement may be a prelude to some sort of high profile gesture after the US elections to the incoming administration. End Summary.

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CHAVEZ MAKES NICE?  
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¶2. (SBU) During his October 16 televised speech, Chavez said the United States "doesn't have and will not have" the ability to stop buying Venezuelan energy and that the U.S. presidential candidates -- who in their October 15 debate discussed ending energy dependency within the next ten years -- "don't know what they are talking about." Chavez compared the proposal with the idea of "getting mad at the only baker in the neighborhood, and threatening not to buy anymore bread." Instead of talking about energy dependency, Chavez suggested that the United States and Venezuela should "sit down, talk, and find agreement because we need each other mutually." He said he was sending a message to both the major U.S. presidential candidates, that "we can live together," adding that the United States is a "great country and can always be a power, but it needs to stop being an empire."

¶3. (C) Comment: Chavez is infamous for his ability to vary his rhetoric wildly according to changing circumstances, his audience, or his mood. The relatively conciliatory tone of Chavez's latest comments, however, does not necessarily represent any real change in Chavez's attitudes toward the USG. More likely, Chavez is trying to appear willing to work with a new U.S. administration, as well stem any public fallout from his aggressive anti-Americanism in the run-up to November's state and local elections. After the US elections we should expect Chavez to make some sort of high profile gesture to the incoming administration. End Comment.

CAULFIELD